

# The Story of Pottery<sup>153</sup>



MAN has made pottery since the dawn of civilization, first shaping his crude cooking vessels entirely by hand from clay, later evolving the potter's wheel to help him in turning out the beautifully shaped vases and urns of later civilizations. Hand made and wheel turned were the only two methods used by man thruout the world to create decorative and useful pottery, until the last century brings the machine with its speed and precision.

In the Indian Patio you may watch Marie, who is from San Ildefonso Pueblo, near Sante Fe, New Mexico, make the beautiful black ware that she is internationally famous for. All the materials she uses have been brought from her native home. From the formless lump of clay she deftly shapes a graceful bowl entirely by hand, and after it has dried in the sun for two or three days, she paints it with three coats of a natural red clay slip and immediately polishes it with a smooth stone until it bears a beautiful sheen. The bowl is now ready for Julian, her husband, to paint upon it the interesting ceremonial designs, using a native brush made from the Yucca plant—and for his paint the juice of the bee-weed mixed with white clay. The pottery now ready for firing, a low fire is built over the carefully stacked bowls, with dried cow dung and cedar chips, left burning for two hours for the red finish, smothered with ashes and left an additional six hours to produce the lovely opalescent black glaze.

And now we turn to the modern methods of pottery making, with the many machines of 1934 creating beauty from a lump of clay. The natural

clay is first placed in a "blunger" and stirred in water until it is thoroughly liquid. It is then screened thru a fine sieve and pumped into a "filter press," which squeezes out the surplus water and leaves the clay in large cakes ready to go thru a "pug mill," which mixes the clay and delivers it ready for the "thrower and presser." If the clay is to be cast in plaster moulds it is again reduced to a liquid state by adding just the required amount of water.

You may see the moulds being filled, flat ware shaped on a "jigger wheel" or pieces pressed in moulds. When dry the ware is sent thru a gas fired continuous circular tunnel kiln designed especially for the 1934 Fair. The heat required for this firing is 1960 degrees.

The ware is now in bisque state and ready for glazing. This is the most important part of pottery making and requires an intimate knowledge of chemistry.

The glaze must exactly fit the clay ware and the colors must be acceptable from an artistic standpoint. After a second trip thru the kiln the pottery is ready for the market.

Next you may watch the skillful "thrower" at work with his potter's wheel. Upon the whirling disc before him he throws a lump of clay; quickly and deftly his fingers shape and guide that whirling mass until a graceful shape takes form before your eyes, which in turn must be fired, the glaze applied and fired again.

Thus is pottery made today by native methods and the machine for world markets.



## HAEGER POTTERY

Factory at Dundee, Ill.  
[Near Elgin]



Chicago Century of Progress, 1934





